

love be absent. I will not say that love is the first grace, for faith first discovers that Christ loves us, and then we love him because he first loved us. Love may be second in order, but it is not second in importance. I may say of faith and love that these are like two roses that are twins; or rather of faith, and hope, and love, that these are three divine sisters who mutually support one another; the health of one betokening the vigour of all, or the decline in one the weakness of all. "Lovest thou me?" Why, the question means, Are you a Christian? Are you a disciple? Are you saved? For, if any man love wife, or child, or house more than Christ he is not worthy of him. Christ must have from every one of his disciples the heart's warmest affection, and where that is not freely accorded depend upon it there is no true faith, and consequently no salvation, no spiritual life.

O, what searching of heart this question demands! Do not flatter yourselves with any false confidence. Many persons have been deceived upon this matter. Alas! they are partial judges, who sit in judgment of themselves, for every defect they have an excuse; they find mitigating circumstances to palliate their basest crimes. No marvel to me, but infinite pity for them that they choose their own delusions and become the dupes of their own infatuation. Their feelings, enlivened by the music of a hymn or impassioned by the fervor of a sermon, they mistake for an inspiration of faith and love; and when the emotions pass off, as they quickly do, they grow loud in their professions. At first their own hearts were deceived; at length they

practice deception on others. O, ye church members! I beseech you, do not conclude that you are members of the invisible church because you are members of the visible church. Though your names may be inscribed on the roll of the faithful here, do not be too sure that they are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Never take your position before God for granted. Do not shrink from a rigid scrutiny as those who never dare ask the question; do not disparage self-examination like those who affect to think it is the devil sets them to the task when he would beset them with legal terrors. Believe me, Satan is too fond of lulling you into presumption to aid or abet in awakening you to make sure of your condition. There is a gross infatuation which is the counterfeit of faith in God. Its credulous victims believe a lie, and fondly they cling to it like limpets to a rock. But sound believers are not afraid of vigilant self-examination, they are prepared to endure a severer test; they say, "Search me, O God, and try me," It is your hollow dissemblers who resent all questionings, and take umbrage at any suspicions. The man who knows that he has pure gold to sell is not afraid of the aquafortis with which the goldsmith tests it, nor even of the crucible into which he may cast it. Not so the impostor who hawks a baser metal; he entreats you to be satisfied with his warranty, though it is worthless as his wares. "Search yourselves; examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?"